

TEAR DOWN SALE SIGNS IN DISTRICT

Realtors Help to Keep Torrance and Lomita Attractive

Realtors of the Torrance district were busy this week taking down "For Sale" signs, posted on property that is listed. The newly organized real estate board consisting of real estate brokers of Lomita and Torrance has voted to remove all signs.

The board last week discussed a standard schedule of commissions which will prevail in this district. Several suggestions were made by various members and it was decided to refer the schedule back to the committee. A new schedule will be presented at the next meeting.

Under the system to be fol-

lowed by the real estate board, property listed with one realtor will be listed with all. This plan has worked out well in many cities.

With the board here working under the splendid code of ethics already adopted, with blanket listings possible for sellers and buyers, realtors expect to see a spirited increase in real estate activities.

Mrs. A. D. Dampf and two children, Dorothy and Margaret, and Miss Marion Hale of Glendale spent the week-end with Mrs. M. H. Ladd and family.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS

(Continued from Last Week)

"You say," I suggested, "that Slyke was killed about two o'clock in the morning. The girl might have come to the house and killed him; then gone back to her uncle's, and told the



"Perhaps the Girl Killed Him."

story about being afraid to go through the woods alone. She said it was three o'clock when he came with her to the house. That's a good alibi, of course; but suppose she had been to the house once before. The dog didn't bark, because he knew her. She was also in the house when the revolver disappeared. If you claim the taking of the gun was foolish, why can't it not be said to be the kind of an illogical thing a woman would do? The average man would know it was no use to remove the gun. You remember how startled the aunt was when she saw the girl."

Bartley had listened with an amused smile that grew broader as I talked. Though I had not been serious when I began, the more I thought of the idea the more plausible my suggestion sounded. Bartley himself had said that in the case we must build up a theory first, and then see if the facts would fit it.

When I had ended, he said that he himself had, at first, considered the possibility of the girl's having done it, but had decided against it. He reminded me that Slyke had been killed on the balcony, and carried down two flights of stairs, and that Slyke weighed one hundred and fifty pounds, the girl not a hundred. Remembering that and the task it was to carry such a heavy weight down so many stairs, did I still think the girl could have done it?

My face turned red with chagrin, and, seeing that I was hurt, he smiled at me kindly and apologized.

"I didn't intend to hurt your feelings, Pelt. You are like all newspaper men, you enjoy building up a story out of nothing. In this affair, we mustn't let ourselves get sidetracked. We shall need all the clear thinking we can do."

Anxious to redeem myself, I said, "John, we have been going on the theory that some one from outside came into the house and killed Slyke, a mysterious visitor who arrived after Lawrence had left. Perhaps the murderer was hiding in the house all the time."

He gave me an interested look and an approving nod.

"Suppose," I went on, "that the murderer was on the balcony. It was a good place to hide. It was so dark up there that he could not have been seen from the ground. Then let us assume that Slyke heard a sound above him, when he was in the room below the balcony, and went up to see what it was. The person may have made the sound on purpose to attract his attention. At any rate, when he comes out on the balcony, he is killed."

Bartley did not speak for a while, turning my suggestion over in his mind. Then he answered, "You may be right. It is possible that some one was waiting for him to come upstairs. But do not forget that, if that is so, the person would have had to wait there for a long time; for he could not tell when Slyke would come into the room below the balcony. Still, your suggestion is well worth keeping in mind."

Although he spoke so favorably of my idea, I could see that he did not really agree with me.

I yawned and Bartley glanced at his watch. It was after three, and we should have been in bed several hours ago. He rose, and taking two objects

from his pocket placed them on the desk. I leaned over to see what they were.

Lying black and sinister on the dark mahogany surface were the revolver that had been taken from Slyke's hand and hidden in the vault, and a little cork stopper, its end covered with red wax that showed where a knife had been used on it.

"Look," Bartley said, pointing at them with a laugh. "The sole result of a day's work. The only clues we have are before us. One is a revolver that did not have a finger print on it; the other a little stopper that might have come from anywhere. From these we have to discover the murderer."

Again he laughed. I stood looking at the two objects, thinking how insignificant they were and wishing they could speak and tell their story. Catching my mood, his face grew grave. He stood looking at them for a moment, then with a sudden gesture swept them into a small box saying, "We ought to have been in bed hours ago."

I had reached my room and was pulling down the bed covers when he called to me. I returned to his room and found him sitting on the edge of his bed taking off his shoes.

"I forgot to tell you, Pelt, that when we reach the solution of this murder, somehow or other whisky will be mixed up with it. When you told me that Slyke had been selling whisky to his friends, I knew that something was wrong. The finding of the liquor in his own vault makes me more certain. He must have known that that whisky was there. Why, under heaven, a man that had the money Slyke was presumed to have had, should secrete whisky on his grounds is more than I know."

"But," I reminded him, "you say he did not have as much money as people thought he had."

"Yes, that is true. The lawyer confirmed what I had heard about his losses. Whisky and Slyke had a good deal in common, you will find."

He yawned, and I started again for my room. As I reached the door he added, "Black thinks the chauffeur killed Slyke. Maybe he did. Still—and he laughed—"I never saw a man with a square head that knew very much. And that detective certainly has a square head."

And with that absurd remark in my mind, I went to bed.

CHAPTER VIII

The Inquest Opens.

It was only natural, after the lateness of the hour at which I went to bed, that I should oversleep the next morning. It was well after nine before I entered the breakfast room; I found no one there but a servant who told me that the others had eaten some time before. When I had finished my breakfast I went in search of Bartley, and found him in the sun parlor surrounded by a mass of newspapers. He waved to me and went on reading.

The inquest was not to be held until one o'clock; and I wondered what Bartley wanted me to do with my morning. As if in answer to my thought, he looked up and said he was going into Saratoga on some errands, and suggested that I go with him and interview the girl friend with whom Ruth had intended to spend the night.

The first place we stopped on our arrival in town was at a large drug store, where Bartley asked to see the proprietor. When he appeared, Bartley placed a small object on the counter before him.

"Can you give me any idea," he asked, "what sort of a bottle that cork came from?"

The object was the little stopper with the red wax which he had showed me the night before. Picking it up, the druggist looked at it very carefully. He turned it over in his hand, scratched the wax with a knife, and took so long in replying that I thought he never would speak.

"I think I can," he said at last. "The little cork not only had its top covered with red wax, but the wax ran down the sides of the bottle. In order to get it open, it was necessary to cut the wax away. It looks to me as if it came from a Park Graham bottle."

"You mean the drug firm?" Bartley asked.

"Yes. I will show you."

He went behind the screen and returned in a second with a little bottle in his hand. It was but a few inches long, and the cork stopper was covered in the same manner with red wax, and part of it had run down the sides of the bottle. It was the mate to the stopper that Bartley had found. Bartley examined the bottle carefully, noted the label, and returned it to the druggist.

When we were again in the automobile, Bartley said, "I wish I were as sure what that stopper was doing in that room as the druggist is of the kind of a bottle it came out of."

Bartley's real object in coming to town was, however, to visit the jail and find out from Roche whether the chauffeur had told what he knew or not. I left him at the jail door, promising to return within an hour, and went in search of the young woman with whom Slyke's step-daughter had expected to spend the night.

When I found her, Miss Morton bore out all that Ruth had said about the way she had happened to go home the night of the murder. They had been to a dance together, and on the way back the car had broken down near the entrance to the Slyke estate. Ruth said, as she was so near, she might as well go home. One of the young men had gone with her to the

little cottage where her uncle lived. He had waited until the old man had come downstairs, and had then rejoined his party. Ruth's story had been true, and I saw how very foolish my suggestion to Bartley had been that she might have committed the murder.

When I returned to the jail, about an hour later, I found that Bartley had gone to Doctor King's office, and I followed him there at once. It was the usual physician's office, with cases of instruments along the walls and a flat-top desk in the center of the room. Bartley and the doctor were bending over a small pad when I entered, and Bartley told me that the doctor had been drawing for him a little map of the roads around the Slyke estate. The doctor looked older than when I had seen him first, far more tired and nervous. It took several years to get over shell shock, from which he suffered, he told us, and he had been very foolish to start to practice again so soon after his return from the front. He recounted a few of his war experiences, and they were enough to have broken any man. He said that, as soon as his duties in regard to the Slyke case were over, he was going to take a rest. All the time he talked to us he played with a pencil or tapped the desk in front of him.

We spoke of the inquest, and he told us that he did not need to call a coroner's jury unless he wished. The facts were so complex or so simple—



He Suggested That, If It Were Murder, Someone From Saratoga Might Have Committed the Crime.

It was hard to say which—that a jury would be confused by them. He admitted that there was no doubt that Slyke had been murdered, but doubted if any jury would bring in a verdict of murder on such slight evidence as we had. He suggested that, if it were murder, some one from Saratoga might have committed the crime. It was not a bad suggestion, and to my surprise Bartley seemed to regard it favorably. The doctor mentioned the chauffeur's arrest, and said that he had only known the man by sight. We talked for an hour or more, then returned home.

Bartley was in his room changing his suit for luncheon, when a telephone call came for him. When he returned he told me that the call had been from Mr. Slyke's lawyer. He had phoned him, Bartley said, that among the papers in the safe was an envelope with ten thousand dollars in bills in it, and that the bank had informed him that, on the day of our arrival Slyke had deposited thirteen thousand dollars with them.

(To Be Continued)

AJAX TIRES

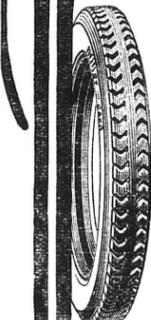


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